

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 P.M., E.D.T., JULY 27, 1976

(202) 426-8787

ISSUED: July 27, 1976

Forwarded to:

Mr. T.W. Kidd
President
West Texas Gulf Pipe Line Company
P. O. Box 2100
Houston, Texas 77001

} SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

} P-76-30 through P-76-35

About 1:00 p.m. on December 1, 1974, a repair crew at work on a leak on the West Texas Gulf Pipe Line Company's 26-inch pipeline near Abilene, Texas, began to excavate the pipe while it was pumping sour crude oil. They attempted to clamp the leak while the sour crude oil was spraying into the air; they were not using oxygen breathing equipment, gas vapor detection instruments, or ropes attached to their belts. All but one man, who ran to the truck to radio for help, were overcome by fumes from the sour crude oil. Of the seven men in the repair crew, six died. 1/

This seven-man crew consisted of employees of West Texas Gulf Pipe Line Company and employees of an independent contractor, all of whom were experienced in working around sour crude oil pipelines. However, the contractor's employees may not have been adequately trained in the pipeline company's operating and maintenance procedures.

The National Transportation Safety Board retained an independent testing laboratory to examine the pipe involved. Metallurgical analysis of the fillet welds in the full-wrap sleeves indicated that they were all improperly made and that they were cracked. The crack in the weld that failed propagated until leakage occurred 3 months later. Additionally, other welds which were removed from this line and were tested also contained cracks.

1/ For more detailed information on this accident, read "Pipeline Accident Report -- West Texas Gulf Pipe Line Company, Abilene, Texas, December 1, 1974." NTSB-PAR-76-4.

PAR-76-4

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that West Texas Gulf Pipe Line Company:

Instruct its personnel in the safety requirements contained in the Operations and Maintenance Manual and monitor employees' work to assure that procedures are followed. (P-76-30) (Class II, Priority Followup)

Use qualified welders to instruct its personnel in the proper installation of fillet welding on repair sleeves. (P-76-31) (Class II, Priority Followup)

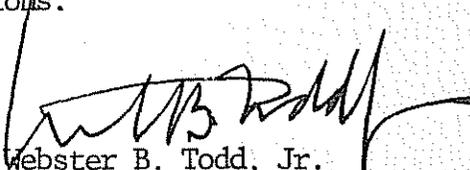
Assure that any contractor engaged to do pipeline repairs is familiar with the West Texas Gulf operation and maintenance procedures and insist that the contractor have available and use the required safety equipment. (P-76-32) (Class II, Priority Followup)

Instruct its maintenance and operating personnel in the hazards of working around sour crude oil. (P-76-33) (Class II, Priority Followup)

Equip its company vehicles or provide, at strategic locations, oxygen breathing equipment, safety ropes, and gas vapor detection instruments. Monitor employee actions to insure that equipment is used in accordance with written procedures. (P-76-34) (Class II, Priority Followup)

Examine the repair records for its pipeline system to determine where other fillet weld repairs have been made and excavate the pipeline at these locations to inspect the fillet weld quality. (P-76-35) (Class II, Priority Followup)

TODD, Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, BURGESS, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.

By: 
Chairman

THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THE INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN SHOULD BE MADE BEFORE THAT DATE.